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“ABRAHAM LINCOLN—THE MAN.”

RESPONSE

OF

HON. WILLIAM SULZER,
OF NEW YORK,

To the above toast, at the banquet of the
Lincoln Association, of Jersey City,
New Jersey,

TUESDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 12, 1907.

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RESPONSE
OF
HON. WILLIAM SULZER.

To the toast "Abraham Lincoln—the Man," at the banquet of the Lincoln Association, of Jersey City, N. J.—

Mr. SULZER said:

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN: This is Lincoln's birthday, and we are met to honor his memory.

It is a matter of much personal gratification for me to be with you to-night. The hospitality of the Lincoln Association, of Jersey City, in the grand old Commonwealth of New Jersey, is famous from one end of the country to the other; and justly so, because your association rises above creed and condition and race and prejudice and stands for the toast assigned to me—"Abraham Lincoln—the Man," and the eternal principles of liberty, justice, and humanity, that must ever be dear to every heart that believes in the greatness and the grandeur of our first martyred President.

I am glad to see so many here to-night—so many distinguished gentlemen, so many eloquent speakers, and I am glad to pay my tribute to your association—the only Lincoln Association in all the land that has never failed, year in and year out, for nearly half a century, to fittingly celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln—and to say that you are to be commended and congratulated for all you have done in the past, for all you are doing now, and for all you will continue to do in the future to make the name of "Lincoln—the Man" shine resplendent with the immortals of all time in all the centuries yet to come.

His name, reaching down through the age of time,
Will still through the age of eternity shine—
Like a star, sailing on through the depths of the blue,
On whose brightness we gaze every evening anew.

Let me say, Mr. President, that Lincoln has ever been my ideal of a man—a great man. I have been a believer in and an admirer of Abraham Lincoln ever since early boyhood days. I have studied his speeches, read and reread his writings, worshiped at his shrine, gloried in his career, and have always been a close student of his wise and just and patriotic teachings. He was, in my opinion, take him all in all, the most heroic figure in all our history, and next to the Declaration of Independence, he wrote the greatest political document in our annals—the Emancipation Proclamation.

In the words of John Stuart Mill, "Abraham Lincoln was the kind of a man Carlyle in his better days taught us to worship as a hero." And as the years come and go he will be wor-

spread more and more in every land and in every clime, from the Occident to the Orient—throughout the world—by the friends of human liberty.

He was one of the purest patriots, one of the wisest statesmen, and one of the greatest men that ever lived, and that ever will live in the world's history for all the years to come. He loved liberty, believed in the people, and battled for the rights of man. He was the friend of the masses and the champion of the oppressed. He loved liberty and truth and justice. He hated cant, despised hypocrisy, and denounced aristocracy. He believed in civil and religious liberty; he advocated not only the freedom of man, but the freedom of conscience, the freedom of speech, and the freedom of the press. He could not tolerate class, or caste, or special privilege. He was the greatest many-sided and myriad-minded man of his day. He had few prejudices and no bigotry. All the prejudices he had were against the evils of his time—against the pride, the assumption, the arrogance, the special privilege, and the intolerance of his fellow-man. He knew the right, and he was great enough and grand enough and brave enough to dare maintain it.

Abraham Lincoln stood for the freedom of man like the Rock of Ages in a tempestuous sea. He never faltered, he never lost hope, he never wavered, he never betrayed a cause or deserted a principle.

He searched for the truth, and, knowing the truth, he had the courage and the manhood, without fear or favor, to promulgate it to all the world. He was a man who stood immovable for man, and he did as much for human liberty as any man who ever lived.

In the retrospect—as the years come and go and the decades pass away—this wonderful man, whose mind had a thousand eyes and whose heart had a thousand thoughts, grows greater and grander and more glorious.

As the centuries come and go the immortal figure of Abraham Lincoln will loom larger and larger on the horizon of human destiny—a great beacon light of eternal progress ever onward and ever upward.

The history of his life, of his joys and sorrows, his hopes and disappointments, from the little log cabin in Kentucky, where he was born, to the Presidential chair, reads like a romance and could not have occurred in any other country than our own, where the humblest boy can rise step by step on the political ladder to the White House. The story of the life and the struggles of Lincoln, of his trials, his tribulations, and his triumphs, is the bright star of hope for the poorest boy in all our land and the inspiration of all America.

Lincoln was a deep thinker, a profound reasoner, a great lawyer, and one of the greatest political philosophers that ever lived; and during his Presidential career, in the darkest hours of our country's history, he was the guiding genius for the Union.

He was a great statesman, enunciated great principles of Government, formulated great policies of State, held the Union intact; and his policies and principles and example will live as long as the Republic endures and ever be an inspiring incentive to every patriot in all our land.

Abraham Lincoln believed in exact justice to all men. He was the incarnation of democracy. He was no respecter of persons, of conditions, or of power. He cared nothing for position and less for wealth. He believed in and enunciated the great cardinal principle of Jefferson—"Equal rights to all; special privileges to none."

He was a great commoner; he gloried in the Declaration of Independence; he believed in its principles, and he honored and revered its immortal author. In speaking of Jefferson in 1861, Mr. Lincoln said:

All honor to Jefferson; to a man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times and so to embalm it there that to-day and in all coming days it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling block to the harbingers of reappearing tyranny and oppression!

In my opinion no higher tribute was ever paid to the author of the Declaration of Independence. All honor to the memory of Jefferson! All honor to the memory of Lincoln! The two great American immortals.

When I was in the legislature of the State of New York, I asked the late Senator Donald McNaughton, the representative from Rochester, who knew Lincoln well, and who frequently met him in the trying days of the civil war, "Who, in your opinion, was the greatest politician and statesman that America has ever produced?" and the wise old Scotch senator, without a moment's hesitation, replied, "Lincoln." And then after a few moments of quiet thought he said:

My young friend, if you want to become a real man and a great man in the American Republic, study and emulate the life of Abraham Lincoln.

From his earliest youth to the sadness of his tragical dying day Abraham Lincoln was always true to the promptings of his heart, true to his principles, and they were the principles of humanity, the principles of liberty, and the principles of a free government. He was always true to his political faith, true to the fundamental teachings of the fathers of the Republic, true to the men who were striving to do right. In one of his speeches he said:

I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have. I must stand with everybody that stands right; stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong.

What a noble sentiment!

Lincoln was a great lawyer. In his own way probably one of the greatest lawyers that ever lived in America. He was a great orator, and his simple speech at Gettysburg is one of the great classics of America; and his innumerable speeches, especially his wonderful debates with Douglas, conclusively prove that he was one of our greatest orators.

He was a man of quaint humor, of much sorrow, of infinite jest, of much common sense, and he searched and knew the human heart. He had faith that right makes might, and in the light of that faith he dared to the end to do his duty as he saw it.

He was a simple man—simple in his strength and in his greatness. In moments of repose he was sad and reflective. His

sympathy was with the poor and the lowly—with the sorrowing. His great heart went out to those who struggle and fail. He was always the same, yet ever different—like the waters of the sea—but he remembered, as he said in his first speech, that he was "humble Abraham Lincoln."

He was a great statesman, and no one to-day, reading his letters and his state papers, can doubt for a moment that he was the ablest and the most farseeing politician of his time, and the greatest and grandest statesman this country has ever produced.

Lincoln stands alone in the illumined pages of American history—the greatest and the grandest and the most colossal figure in all our annals.

No one will ever know the blood drops and the suffering of Abraham Lincoln during the darkest and most trying days of the civil war, the greatest war of modern times, when a million men from the North and a million men from the South, with their guns and drums, and their tramping to and fro, met in the shock of battle, shook the earth, and the very pillars of our free institutions. Thank God, father Abraham won, and we are brothers again.

In this connection I want to tell a story, that perhaps has never been printed before, regarding Mr. Lincoln's sadness and greatness, and dry wit and inimitable humor, and in this composition there was much of all these elements. In the early days of the war for the Union a great body of leading bankers and financiers of New York called at the White House to see Mr. Lincoln, and asked him to send ships and troops to New York to protect their treasures. Mr. Lincoln listened patiently to all this committee had to say, and when they finished he said, in his quiet, sad, and simple way:

Gentlemen, in answer to all you have said, I reply that I am doing everything in my power with the forces at my command to save the Union. There is no danger to your treasures in New York City, and instead of asking me to send war ships and troops to New York to protect them, you should go back home and lend your money to the Government and help save the Union.

The great committee of bankers and financiers returned to New York wiser and more patriotic men from these few words of the immortal martyred President.

Lincoln loved the Union, and his first inaugural message proves that his only desire was to save the Union from civil strife and dissolution. He had said many times before that a house divided against itself can not stand, and Lincoln was right.

When Doctor Long, an intimate friend of Lincoln, said to him one day, "Well, Lincoln, that foolish speech will kill you—will defeat you for all office—for all time to come," referring to the "house divided" speech, Mr. Lincoln replied:

If I had to draw a pen across and erase my whole life from existence, and I had one poor gift or choice left, as to what I should save from the wreck, I should choose that speech, and leave it to the world unerasd.

He was the friend of the toiler—of the producer—of the great army of men who earn their bread in the sweat of their face. In his message to Congress in December, 1861, he said:

Labor is prior to and independent of capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. No men living are more worthy to be trusted than those who toil up from poverty—none less inclined to take or touch aught which they have not honestly earned.

Lincoln died in the prime of his life, at the summit of his career, in the zenith of his fame, in the service of his country, loved by every friend of man, and mourned by all the world.

There is a reaper whose name is Death,
And with his sickle keen
He reaps the bearded grain at a breath,
And the flowers that grow between.

But the reaper can never rob humanity of the undying fame of Abraham Lincoln. As my friend Col. Henry Watterson has most truly and eloquently said:

A thousand years hence no story, no tragedy, no epic poem will be filled with greater wonder or be read with deeper feeling than that which tells of his life and death.

Lincoln was indeed a man—the man—upon whose life we shall not look again; and take him all in all he was the friend of man—the greatest apostle of human liberty the world has ever seen.

The mortal Lincoln is no more. He sleeps beneath the marble shaft at Springfield, and his shrine is, and ever will be, the Mecca of the liberty-loving people of the world whither shall journey to the end of time the countless millions yet unborn to kneel and kindle anew their patriotism and their zeal for liberty.

But Lincoln needs no monument of marble to perpetuate his memory: he will live forever in his work for man; his words will live in the hearts of the people of free America, and future generations will arise to call him blessed as the patron saint of their consecrated liberties.

President Lincoln was perhaps more abused and caricatured during the time he was in the White House than any other man that ever lived in our country. And yet, when he was stricken down by the cruel bullet of an irresponsible fanatic, all the world bowed down and wept, and every Government on earth paid homage to his great heart and sympathetic soul, to his deeds and works and words and worth.

No paper in all the world eulogized Lincoln more than Punch of London, and yet, upon the death of Lincoln, it wrote one of the most beautiful tributes that ever was written to the memory of man, and James Russell Lowell, one of America's greatest poets, summed it all up in a stanza in his Commemorative Ode when he said of the undying fame of Lincoln:

Great captains, with their guns and drums, disturb our judgment for the hour:
But at last silence comes—these all are gone:
And standing like a tower our children's children shall behold the glory of his fame,
This kindly, earnest, brave far-seeing man—
Sageacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame—
New birth of our new soil—the first American.





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